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South Korea: President Pak Chong-hui is faced with a new crisis in the National Assembly.

Opposition legislators are paralyzing all legislative business by a sit-in at the Assembly hall; they threaten to continue obstructive tactics until the government makes concessions. The primary issue is the ruling party's failure to establish a committee to investigate irregularities in the National Assembly elections last June. Formation of the committee was a major item in the compromise which persuaded the opposition to end its six-month boycott of the Assembly last month.

Some members of the ruling party fear investigation of the elections could lead to their ouster from the Assembly and strongly oppose establishment of the committee. There is also some indication that they have backing from President Pak, who may be interested in protecting high administration officials involved in the election irregularities.

Violence in the Assembly is not uncommon, although it has become less frequent in recent years. If back-stage negotiations fail to resolve the present impasse the government party may be compelled to use force to regain control of the Assembly floor.

NOTES

Czechoslovakia: A three-day meeting of the Czechoslovak party central committee ended late on 21 December. A communiqué has not as yet been published, but the few details available suggest that agreement on domestic policy matters was limited to a decision to merge key industrial ministries into one unit. So far there has been no hint of what changes, if any, in the party leadership were decided.

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USSR - Eastern Europe: The Soviet bloc foreign ministers, winding up their meeting on the Middle East, have issued a communiqué based on a lowest common denominator. The statement claims complete unity of views among the participants, including the Rumanians. In order to achieve this consensus, however, the foreign ministers balanced a renewed call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Arab territory with the reaffirmation of Israel's right to exist. The absence of any pledge of military and economic aid to the Arabs also appears to represent a concession by Moscow to some of the East Europeans.

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Venezuela: The government's release of almost 500 political prisoners in its annual Christmas amnesty may result in increased terrorism during 1968. Among those released was Communist leader Pedro Duno, as well as all members of the terrorist group that abducted a US military officer in 1964. The extensive amnesty probably reflects optimism over government successes against guerrillas in recent months, as well as the government's desire to avoid charges of repression during the 1968 election campaign.

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Congo (Kinshasa): The foreign community of Lubumbashi (formerly Elisabethville) in Katanga is preparing for possible disturbances this weekend. President Mobutu will spend several days there to conclude his month-long trip through the Congo and east Africa. The notorious Second Paratroop Battalion, the Congolese unit which created considerable havoc while "maintaining order" in Lubumbashi last July, is also arriving for the occasion. Although under orders not to carry arms in the city, this battalion has ignored discipline in the past and will probably again cause unpleasant incidents.

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